

BLM News

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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WILDLIFE HABITAT RESTORED BY PARTNERS

Restoring wildlife habitat after a wildfire is a challenge. Several partners are working together to reseed over 1,340 acres of checkerboard public and private lands on the west side of the Sheep Creek Range about 18 to 20 miles north of Battle Mountain, Nevada.

Glamis Dee Gold Mining Company; Barrick Goldstrike Mines, Inc; Nevada Chukar Foundation; 25 Ranch LLC; Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; and BLM have joined forces to restore the area. The cost of the project is approximately \$148,000.

The larger fires on the Sheep Creek Range area most recently occurred in 1984 as part of the Lander Fire and burned again in 2001. As the 1999, 2000, and 2001 fire seasons were extensive, wildlife habitat and especially big game winter range were severely impacted.

“What makes this project different from many of our normal fire rehabilitation activities is its intensity,” said BLM Elko wildlife biologist Ken Wilkinson. “In April 2005, 709 acres (public) and 634 acres (private land in partnership with NDOW) were disked to prepare the seedbed and in October 2005, the area was drill-seeded with a mixture of native and exotic perennial shrubs, grasses and forbs.”

“We’ll also be establishing a 600 to 800-foot by 3-mile-long fuel break to protect the area,” Wilkinson continued. “The newly drill-seeded main area and surrounding fuel break are adjacent to an unburned, pristine area of sagebrush habitat that’s critical wildlife winter range. The reason for certain shrubs, grasses, and forbs on the fuel break area is that they provide cover and forage for wildlife and can slow down or stop a wildfire. The next step is to ‘over-seed’ the fuel break with forage kochia and yarrow, and to over-seed the main area with sagebrush, forage kochia, yarrow, and winterfat. Over-seeding equipment donated to NDOW by the Mule Deer Foundation and Newmont Gold will be used. This same equipment has been used over several

thousand acres for big game habitat rehabilitation efforts on public and private since the early 1990s.”

Wilkinson concluded, “Although the project area is just over 1300 acres, it’s important for several reasons. Since 1964, over 90% of big game winter habitat in the southern portion of Big Game Management Area 6 has burned. We’re trying to protect one of those few unburned areas. This project also fulfills the offsite mitigation work for mule deer and antelope for the Glamis Dee Gold Pit and is the last of several mitigation projects for the Barrick Goldstrike Mines’ Betze Pit. It completes their obligation for big game habitat mitigation.”

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